

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

Casey Bauer, 303-894-2338 w, casey.bauer@state.co.us Eric Brown, 303-547-5308 c, eric.brown@state.co.us

Task Force recommends wildfire mitigation actions to protect lives, property and environment

DENVER — **Monday, Sept. 30, 2013** — The Wildfire Insurance and Forest Health Task Force today presented a report to Gov. John Hickenlooper and General Assembly leadership that calls for developing a map of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), calculating risks for individual properties in high hazard areas, and facilitating mitigation and prevention measures at the local level.

"This report gives us constructive and proactive ways to address the wildfire threat in Colorado," Hickenlooper said. "These recommendations include concrete steps Colorado can take to mitigate wildfire danger. We appreciate the hard work by Task Force members and look forward to working with the General Assembly, local governments and others to take the appropriate next steps."

The governor created the Task Force by executive order in January 2013. The group was asked to identify and reach agreement on ways to encourage activities, practices and policies that would protect property and people within and adjacent to the WUI and Colorado's landscape, which is critical to the state's economic health.

The Task Force also focused on ways to provide greater customer choice and knowledge of insurance options. The group's recommendations include to:

• Create a uniform methodology across the state for identifying and quantifying risk to specific properties.

- Adopt a state-wide model ordinance addressing building materials, zoning codes, defensible space requirements, and other similar provisions for properties in the WUI. This could be developed in various ways, including as a mandatory state-wide standard to be implemented by local governments, or as a voluntary state standard with state funding availability tied to local government participation.
- Consider funding needs for mitigation and a fee assessed for properties located in the WUI. These funds would be collected at the state level and distributed to local governments to help offset the costs of mitigation for properties in the WUI.
- Support a new approach being developed by the Air Pollution Control Division of the Department of Public Health and Environment for prescribed burns. The new "general permit" will be tested on a pilot basis, and is expected to improve flexibility for conducting prescribed burns while providing for extensive public notification, education and air quality monitoring.
- Increase awareness about the importance of property mitigation, inform homeowners and landowners about available resources, including tax incentives, community programs, public/private partnerships and existing insurance reform legislation.

"We hope the recommendations will serve as a way forward to meet our shared goal of protecting lives, property and our natural environment from devastating wildfires," Task Force Chair Barbara Kelly said. "These ideas will require the collaboration of all stakeholders, from homeowners to communities to industry, to successfully implement." The Task Force report also says the recommendations may be further developed, adapted and implemented by the Governor, the Colorado General Assembly, state and local governments, public-private partnerships and the insurance industry.

"The Task Force recognizes that some of its recommendations will be costly and potentially difficult to implement," the report says. "However, the Task Force accepted that its mission was to identify bold and innovative recommendations to break through the historic barriers."

The full report can be found at www.dora.colorado.gov.

###